

# Tall, Thin and Faceless

Walls.

White walls.

White padded walls.

Day in.

Day out.

White padded walls.

Let me tell you why I see these white padded walls day in and day out.

I am, or at least according to several doctors, certifiably insane. Hallucinations, paranoia, schizophrenia, multiple-personality disorders, the list goes on and on. I was a normal, working class man, living the American dream. I had a wife and two children. My income was high and my debt was low. I had it all. Then things started to go wrong. They started to go in a direction I couldn't even fathom.

My wife and I had always wanted to go to the British Isles, but for the longest time, the money wasn't there. It took seven years and two promotions before we could even begin to think realistically. Anyway, after months of careful planning and preparation, we were on a plane flying over the Atlantic Ocean. Just me and her. No kids. No job. Nothing but beautiful scenery and relaxation for twenty-four straight days.

Fast forward a week. Having taken in many of the big city sites, we decided to see some of the smaller places, out in the countryside. We packed a small bag of essential and took a cab into the rural side of England. This is where things started to go wrong. Not 'the whole world is coming to an end' wrong, even though it sure felt like it, just wrong. We came across an old tailor in a moderately decorated cabin. He said he had been making suits for over sixty-five years. My interest was piqued. I decided to splurge a little bit and buy one. Nothing beats the craftsmanship of a home-tailored suit. After paying for it and calling for a cab, a picture on a wall caught my eye. It was old. Black and white. Mid 50s. It was a very tall and very slim suited man standing on a grassy plain. His face appeared to be smudged out. It was old. I didn't think much of it. Even so, something about this picture was unnerving. It gave an odd vibe. It felt almost ... *menacing*. I inquired about the photo but the old man refused to talk about it. That just added fuel to my mental fire.

Days upon days had passed. My wife and I took in every sight, every castle, every grassy knoll we possibly could but, alas, eventually we had to go home. Part of us wanted to

stay, but we were exhausted. There was no way we could spend any longer there. Our flight back home was vague as we were both asleep most of the time; the drive back home was hazy. We just wanted to relax. As I pulled into the driveway, something was off. Something didn't feel right. I got the same feeling I had when I saw the picture inside the tailor's home. It was a feeling of dread and curiosity. I didn't want to continue but my mind forced me to. I stepped out of my car and when I stood onto the concrete, my legs suddenly gave out. I fell to the ground onto my right hand and found myself unable to force myself up. I must be more tired than I thought. My wife helped me up and supported me up to the bedroom. I was going to be asleep for a very long time.

Or so I thought...

That night, I was plagued by nightmares of the suited man on the grassy plain. It wasn't really a bad dream as much as it was his presence haunting me in my subconscious. Just standing there, unnaturally tall, unnaturally thin. Standing there without a face, without an identity and no matter how hard I tried, his face never focused. It was as though the picture had come alive in my thoughts but remained unchanged. This went on until I had been abruptly woken up by the sound of the smashing of a lamp.

I raced down two flights of stairs leading from the bedroom to the living room. Armed only with the brick we used as a doorstop, I slowly crept to where the only lamp in our house used to be. I knelt down to pick up a piece to examine when I felt a slight blow of wind from behind me, like a person running past. I shot up faster than a startled cat. I spun around to see what or who it was. My eyes had still not adjusted so surrounding me was nothing but darkness. My next thought was to listen. Nothing. Not a single thing. Not even the sound of a house settling. Maybe it was my nightmare, or fatigue playing tricks on me. Maybe we had a slight tremor that caused the lamp to inch off of the table. Regardless, I was tired and I sorely wanted to get some nightmare-free sleep.

It didn't happen.

Throughout the rest of the night, the "*slender*" man was everywhere within my dreams. He was a bit curious though. He only ever seemed to cautiously hide behind trees. Only in the original photo was he completely exposed. Even subconsciously I wished I hadn't moved next to a forest knowing he could be lurking. Watching me. *Analyzing me*.

It didn't take long to force myself awake. 10:46 A.M. I looked to my left. I looked to my right. My wife was calmly sleeping. Lucky her. I dragged myself out of bed and slowly made my way downstairs. I half expected the TV to be blaring with my kids' eye glued to the screen but then I realized that they were at their Grandma's house. They were due back that day. I was going to miss the quiet. It was alright – I missed my kids even more. I continued down the stairs, hoping to get a game of Solitaire in on the computer, when

something made me feel very weak and hollow. The lamp wasn't broken but it wasn't brand new, either. Someone took the pieces and shoddily glued them back together. And the glue wasn't glue. It was black and rubbery, like tar. I would have tasted it for origin, but that's never a good idea. My wife needed to wake up. Soon. I was starting to panic.

I explained what happened the night before, about the lamp and the nightmares and such. She just rolled her eyes and told me I was on something. Wives. Sometimes I think they do it on purpose. Still feeling uneasy from this morning, I managed to force myself to look out into the forest behind our house. It was very calm. Nothing out of the ordinary. It wasn't completely dark so it didn't look nearly as ominous as it usually did at night. I was badly lamenting this night, in particular. Suddenly, I saw a light out of the corner of my eye that caused me to nearly jump out of my skin. It was just the kids getting dropped off. I swear I was thinking too much into this. I couldn't keep my nerves steady half the time.

Hours passed. We played with the children. We put them to bed. We relaxed on the couch. My wife was asleep on my chest. I was nodding off. I slowly closed my eyes. It wasn't long before the quiet was broken and my wife and I were woken up. A window broke upstairs. In a panicked flurry, we ran up the stairs as fast as we could. Our eldest son, scared out of his mind, said it came from his brother's room. Without even thinking, I kicked the door in. Only the nightlight in the far corner brought light into the pitch black room. And there he was. The man from my dreams. The *slender* man. Hovering over my son's bed.

Having seen him, I acted without even knowing what was going on. Punches were thrown. Long black tendrils whipped all around. The last thing I remember was being held tightly above the ground and thrown against a wall. That's when I blacked out. When I came to, my wife was in tears. I had three cracked ribs. My son was gone. The slender man had my son and there was nothing I could do. But I knew he was going to come back, and that was when I would get him.

The rest of the day was full of emotion. My wife could hardly stop crying. My other son was in a constant state of shock. I could barely think straight. I did, however, manage to call the police. I told them my son had been abducted by a man in a long black suit. I kept the details of the tendrils to myself in fear they wouldn't believe me. But that was the least of my worries. I needed to figure out when he would return.

The police showed up and took each of our statements. They examined my son's room. They did a quick scour of the forest outside. It seemed not a single piece of evidence was found. They had begun to leave when something hanging from a very high up branch caught their eye. It was a piece of material. Black. Pinstriped. Much like the suit I bought while I was on vacation. I pointed this out to the police and they inquired to see my suit. I

gladly showed them the way. When they opened the closet door, what they found was beyond belief. Wrapped in my now tattered suit was my son. Completely drenched in blood. He didn't look conscious. Both myself and the police were shocked and disgusted. That's when I blacked out.

When I came to, I was in an unfamiliar place. Grey painted walls. Small windows on one of them. One exceptionally bland table. Great, I was in an interrogation room. I sat there, alone for the good part of an hour before actual human life entered the room with me. Now, my memory is a bit hazy at this point so I'll try and sum up the conversation as best as possible. The Officer had said "Your son didn't survive. Deepest sympathies to you and your family. You've not been proven guilty but evidence leans towards it. A further investigation must be held. You will be brought back home but you will be under constant supervision..." and so on and so forth.

I was driven home in the back of a police cruiser. Last time I was there was in high school when vandalism was the cool thing to do. I was welcomed with open arms from my still sobbing wife and my emotionless son. Going back wasn't easy. Thankfully, we didn't have to stay long. The police explained that we were going to stay at a hotel for a few days. We gathered our things when a picture from our fridge caught my eye. It was a picture my late son drew. When I saw it, my heart nearly stopped. In the cutest crayon drawing you can imagine was my son standing next to a tall faceless man in a black suit. I made sure no one was around to see me stuff the picture into my pocket.

The hotel was what you would normally expect. Simple wallpaper. Two twin beds. One TV. Cheap flowery design on everything else. It would have to do since we were stuck there. We settled in, placing out our stuff and lying down. I, on the other hand, went to the bathroom; the only place I knew was private. I locked the door and took the picture out of my pocket. I scoured the page for clues but to no avail. All that was there was the crude drawing and his name scribbled into the bottom corner. The thing that unnerved me the most was the fact that the slender man had no face. No identity. Not a single outstanding feature. It rattled me to the core. But I had enough stress from today. I needed sleep. Badly.

The night was rough but I still managed to. Not a single dream with the slender man either. Then a banging came from the door. Being half asleep the whole time, it scared the shit out of me. I turned to my right. 5:14AM. Heads were going to roll. I dragged myself out of bed and very slowly opened the door. It was the police officer that drove us here. He had a look of panic on his face. He said my son was missing. Nothing clicked. It took me a minute to wake up and grasp reality again. My son's body was missing. Snatched right from the hospital. But this time, I knew where he was.

I had to get back to the forest. I had to find the remains of my suit. It was the only way to stop the slender man. But I knew it wasn't going to be easy. I had asked the police officer if he could drive me back to my house as I had forgotten something. He pondered a moment and obliged. This time, I had been allowed to sit in the passenger seat. The ride there was quiet. I tried to get some sleep. He didn't start any conversation. When we got there, I was careful to make sure no one else saw me. I entered the house through the front door and quickly escaped out the back and headed for the forest.

It was still very dark out so traversing the heavily wooded area was not easy. The only light that came through was that of the moon. So I walked, almost blind, hoping to find some scrap of my suit. It seemed to be impossible until amidst the darkness, I saw a scrap of paper. The white of it stood out like a sore thumb. I leaned down to pick it up and when I turned it around, what I saw completely horrified me. It was another drawing by my son, with both him and the slender man. But this one was different. There were three other people. A boy the same height as him, an older looking girl, and another boy as big as the girl. Then it dawned on me. It was us. My family. My son drew us in with the slender man. Then I saw a beam of light. It was the police officer. I ran up to him and showed him the picture. I explained that my family was in great danger. All he told me was that there was nothing he could do. He said we should go back to the car and we would go back to the hotel.

A million thoughts ran through my head. Should I concede? Should I resist? What I did next is peanuts compared to what was about to unfold but I didn't know and looking back, I didn't want to. I gave into the police officer's request and began to head back to the car. While he had his back towards me, I picked up a fair six stone and brought it down upon his head. He staggered a bit and fell to the ground. I took the car keys off of him and ran towards the car. It was still dark. I needed to get back to the hotel.

I screeched to an immediate halt in the hotel parking lot and ran towards the door where we were staying. I swung open the door to behold the one thing I was trying to prevent. Amidst all the blood that painted the room were three bodies making a circle around the slender man. He turned and looked at me. His hollow, non-existent eyes stared deep into me. Emotions I had never felt before, emotions without names filled my brain and body. It was like he was making me feel everything he ever had. And with an outstretched hand, he said only one thing. One thing that would be burned into the back of my mind forever.

*"Help me ..."*

Sirens came from behind me. I turned around to see the police cruisers pull into the parking lot and watched them get out. Using car doors as shields with their guns aimed at me, I raised my hands above my head. I slowly looked behind myself to see the slender

man fade to nothing, leaving only a tattered suit in a heap on the floor. He killed my family. My life would never be the same. And yet, something told me I was never going to see him again. I would never be able to exact revenge, even if I figured out how to.

Everything up until the white padded walls isn't exactly clear to me. I've been told that after they saw me at the hotel with my DNA on the suit, I was made the primary culprit. After they arrested me and subjected me to frivolous testing to which they got nothing more than unintelligible noises, I was submitted to this place. The white padded walls. The same white padded walls I see all day, every day...

No one will know what happened to me and my family. The emotions that were broadcasted to me caused me to lose my ability of speech. Now all I can do is write and draw. I write out the emotions that the slender man felt. I draw the things he has seen. They are what keep me here. I am a victim of another man's emotion. Sometimes I feel like I have become him. Like we were the same being. That day, I learned something.

We were.

We were slender...